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Smallholder Agriculture Production in Zimbabwe: A Survey

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Abstract

The study focuses on smallholder agriculture production in Zimbabwe as a pathway for fighting rural poverty and underdevelopment. The entitlement approach was used to analyse the agriculture issues of smallholder farmers. Using questionnaires and interviews to gather household data, the study employed quantitative and qualitative data analysis through spreadsheet and Atlas Ti analysis. The study revealed that smallholder agriculture in Zimbabwe is predominantly staple production, with cash cropping more prevalent in resettlement areas. Poverty remains deeply entrenched in communal areas where land tenure systems, input supply programs, and farmer representations are detrimental to sector development. Revitalising smallholder agriculture would provide pathways of nearly 7 million people in rural Zimbabwe out of poverty. Thus development would need a refocus of policy conditions in communal areas to allow smallholder agriculture growth and development.

Keywords: Rural development, smallholder agriculture, land tenureship, input and institutions

1. Introduction

The paper analyses findings of a survey on smallholder production practises and challenges in Zimbabwe. Smallholder farmers are identified as farmers who are in communal areas, resettled small scale areas (Makoni District), and small scale commercial areas in Mazowe who own less than 35 hectares of land. The study is based on the entitlement approach by Sen (1981) as a conceptual and theoretical framework for analysing rural development conditions. The study further adapts the theoretical framework to a rights-based approach which recognises the frame of entitlements open to smallholder farmers. The study uses a mixed-methods research design which emphasis the views and perceptions of smallholder farmers in production decisions and operations. Interviews, document content analysis, and questionnaires were used to gather data on land tenure, productivity, markets, and farmer organisations. The study revealed that smallholder farmers in communal areas and resettled areas have different crop and livestock production practices which are influenced differently by government policy and the effectiveness of producer organisations. Smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe face a number of challenges ranging from lack of land tenure security, poorly-designed input supply programmes which

push production costs, and a lack of effective producer organisations which can represent the different needs of smallholder farmers. It is important that the Zimbabwean government develop policy interventions and implementation matrices that would create benefits for the poor. Such policy need to be comprehensive and able to stimulate effective markets for smallholder produce to allow resilience and sustainability.

2. Theoretical Framework

The paper uses Sen's Entitlement Approach to contextualise conditions in rural areas and actions and ways to alleviate poverty (1981). Entitlement denotes a set of different alternative commodity bundles that a person can acquire through the use of the various networks of relationships that are influenced by a variety of social, political, and legal factors open to someone in this position (Sen, 1990: 23). Sen's Entitlement Approach allows the understanding of substantive entitlements and development issues in a multi-dimensional and pluralistic manner.

The study further adopts as the theoretical framework the Entitlement Approach to a rights-based entitlement to the socio-economic rights of rural citizens. Though Sen (1981) looked at entitlements during famines, the study extends this concept to the inclusion of rights of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe. Rural people have social, legal, economic, cultural, political, and environmental rights. They also have development rights, meaning development should also be afforded to it. The State has an obligation to ensure that these rights are enjoyed by its citizens through the creation of conducive development policy and food security.

The right-based approach to rural development is critical, as it elucidates issues like food security in terms of the unalienable rights of rural people. The entitlement approach helps in analysing the opportunities for smallholder agriculture growth and rural transformations. In this regard, an entitlement can also be considered a right to various developmental needs shaped by the policy framework in a country. Though the entitlement approach (Sen, 1981, 1984, 1986 and1990) is predominantly a famine analysis framework, its generality and applicability to the field of poverty and social policy means its adaptation to rural development is of immense value. It is important to note that rural development is a composite of food security, employment, social, and economic issues, which are basically the same human conditions issues which preoccupied Sen (1981). A rights-based entitlement approach does not only explain the social processes and dynamics of rural communities, but also provides a very integral way of looking at the opportunity bundles available to rural people. Perhaps the failure of earlier rural development efforts in Africa is their failure to look at the socio-political contexts in which rural people construct their livelihoods. Moreover, with the rights-based entitlement approach, one has the liberty to use an individual person, group, or community as the unity of analysis, which is of great significance to rural analysis.

Sen's entitlement approach is built upon the endowment set, entitlement mapping, and entitlement set of an individual (Sen, 1981; Murugan, 2003, Osman, 1995). The endowment set is defined as the combination of all resources legally owned by a person (Osman, 1995). In this study the composite rights of rural citizens are viewed as an endowment set of rights. In the context of rural

development, resources may mean tangibles, such as land and equipment, and intangibles, such as skills, knowledge and social networks, which are disposable to a household. Of course the utilisation of resources is subject to norms, culture, rules, and laws governing their extraction and use. This is important for rural poverty reduction, as resources may be available but with limits on utilisation based on race, gender, caste, or political practice. Thus, the State ought to provide and secure an appropriate rights mixes and guarantees for rural people.

Central to the rights-based entitlement approach is entitlement mapping, such that the relationship between the endowment is set on the one hand and the entitlement on the other. Entitlement mapping entails the rates at which resources of the endowment set can be converted into goods and services included in the entitlement set (Kuklys and Robeyns, 2004; Osman, 1995). Entitlement mapping basically include three aspects of production, exchange, and transfer components. In rural development, understanding entitlement mapping provides a holistic analytical framework for efficient production systems, trade markets and state welfare systems. The critical role of the State in safeguarding, promoting, and capacitating smallholder farmers is an essential component of a rights-based entitlement approach. It can also allow the measurement of the efficiency of the markets in terms of lowering transaction costs.

The third and last component of the entitlement approach is the entitlement set, which can be defined as the set of all possible combinations of goods and services that a person can legally obtain by using the resources of his endowment set (Sen, 1981:29). It is the goal of rural development to broaden the entitlement set within a locality so that people would always have alternative pathways for development. Broadening the rural economy through both on-farm and non-farm opportunities is another way of providing adequate entitlement bundles for poor rural citizens. Conceptualising the 'entitlement set' in rural development would require a central role by the State. The State should have deliberate efforts to provide appropriate policies and subsidies in smallholder agriculture production systems (which are cereal based), exchange markets (free or regulated) and social protection systems.

In rural development the study adapts the entitlement failure concept not only to refer to food only, but as failure to meet developmental rights sets. A rights-based entitlement failure thus requires reflections on the approach so as to properly diagnose whether the failure is due to endowment loss, production failure, exchange failure, or transfer failure. This is of immense value to policymakers, as some form of rights failure in rural development may require direct state intervention (through strengthening rural assets or production systems) or some form of trade-related interventions (such as lowering of transaction costs and input and output subsidies to stabilise the market).

It should be emphasised that the concept of entitlement as adapted in this study is to provide lens through which the effects of various rural development efforts and narratives can be understood. The entitlement approach does not provide the substantive issues of rural development, but ensures that the substantive issues of smallholder farmers and institutions are discussed; their impact to the human conditions would be sufficiently dealt with. In this regard, it is important now to look at the development of the narration on rural development in Africa, but with a focus towards Zimbabwe.

3. Methodological Overview

The study uses the triangulation research method in both data collection and analysis. These methods were taken as the primary sources of information for the study. The mixed methodology is critical for cross-checking data on documents and from interviews. Rural development and underdevelopment require a rigorous interrogation of stylized theories, facts, and hard economic data in official and non-official documentary sources in order to fully articulate the role of agriculture and rural development in the socio-economic transformation of the poor. The study also utilizes archival research (particularly classified and non-classified documents of both the State and non-state development agencies) in probing state interventions in smallholder agriculture. The study utilises the household as the basic unit of observation, analysis, and source of information. Ellis (1998) defines a household as a social group which resides in the same place, shares the same meal, and makes joint or coordinated decisions over resource allocation and income pooling. This definition accommodates most of the households in the researched districts. The household head (HH) will be the respondent for the selected households. Village heads were also interviewed to verify household data and look for trends and triangulation in the study. Government officials in agricultural and socio-economic line ministries were also interviewed, especially on the rural development projects and policies of the State. Unstructured interviews were the basis of data collection, but questionnaires were also administered to collect critical and statistical data on smallholder agriculture production. Overall, the study depended on the qualitative approach to research and borrows some few techniques from the quantitative approach to analyzing and quantifying the impacts and effectiveness of production and livelihood activities.

The study used primary data sources from questionnaires and archival sources of information in gathering information on the efficacy of an agriculture-led rural development. The study also used both structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews to collect information. Structured questionnaires were administered to household heads (HH). These have limited open-ended questions as their main use in the study to gather basic household characteristics and assets. Unstructured interviews were used to gather detailed data on policy issues which are key to a vibrant rural economy. The study uses all households in each of the three selected districts as the sample frame. The responding households were selected from a pool of sampled villages. Interviewees for unstructured interviews were selected using the purposive sampling method, with the job position of relevant ministries determining whether the questions to be asked were policy or operationally related to rural development.

4. Findings Presentations, Discussions and Analysis

4.1 Agriculture Production in Communal and Resettlement

In Mudzi district, the study found that the communal farmers predominately produce maize, small grains, groundnuts, and cotton. Figure 1 below shows the crop mix for an average household in Mudzi communal area:

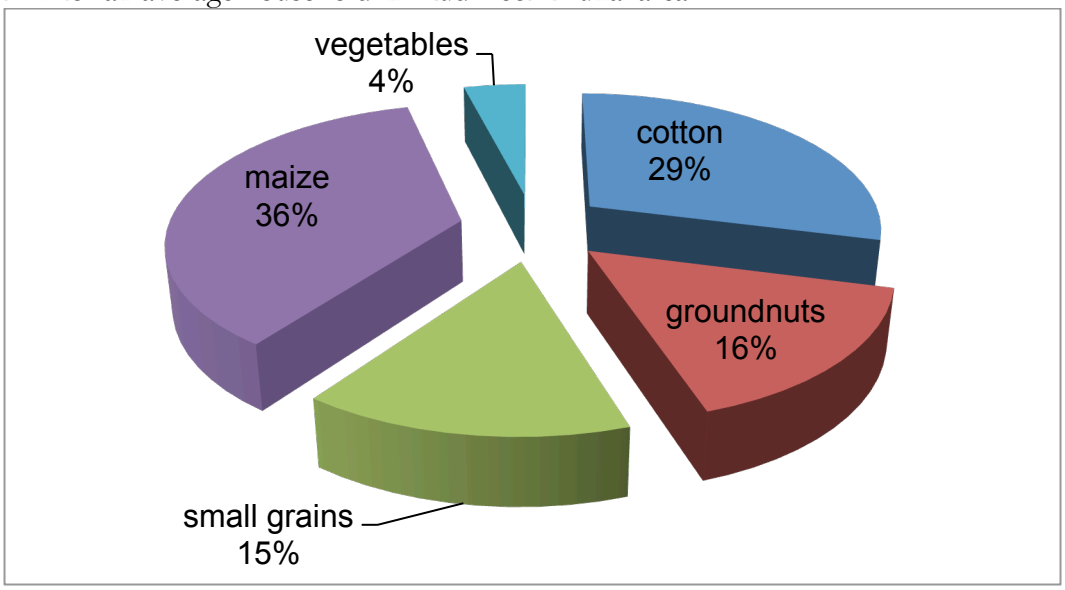

Figure 1: Percentage Household Annual Crop Mix (ton/year, N=50) (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

The study reveals that the crop mix is tilted toward cash crops, with cotton and groundnuts constituting 56% of annual crop output. Maize also has a significant percentage due to its primary role as a staple crop in Zimbabwe. Small grains also have a significant portion as they are normally taken as *sadza*, the staple foodstuff. Vegetables have a low output, as most households produce them in winter when surface water is available.

This crop mix of communal farmers has a direct impact on poverty alleviation and rural development for smallholder farmers in communal areas. First, the respondents revealed that they do not change the average hacterage for maize, as it is the backbone of their food security and survival. However, output has remained constant, at approximately 1.6 tonnes per year due to lack of maize seed and the costs of fertilizers. This implies that any policy intervention in communal food security has to include seed maize and fertilizers as part of an input package if it is to be successful.

Traditional small grains are now a common crop in Mudzi. 86% of the respondents revealed that they have started growing small grains in the last two years due to the decline in annual rainfall and campaigns by non-governmental organisations that see them as adaptive strategies to the effects of climate change. However most communal farmers blame low output on the low hacterage in which they farm small grains, as they require a lot of labour in their processing. An example is the millet crop, which would need labour for re-planting, weeding, harvesting, pounding to remove stalks, and pounding for mealie-meal. One interviewee indicated that they only produce small grains like millet as a fall-back crop in times of droughts, as they can be stored for a long time.

Cotton production in communal areas has been on a steady increase in terms of area under cultivation and number of households. The increase of population in rural Zimbabwe due to unemployment and shortages of housing in urban areas (Herald, 2013) has led to an increase in adult labour force, particularly for communal farmers. Labour is a critical input in cotton production. Economic factors have also led to an increase in the number of households producing cotton. The dollarization of the economy, which has led to the circulation of US dollars, means farmers have to grow cash crops so they can make payments for school fees, grinding mill, and other services. However the increase in the number of households cultivating cotton as a cash crop is under threat due to declining cotton prices in Zimbabwe. This is shown in Figure 2 below:

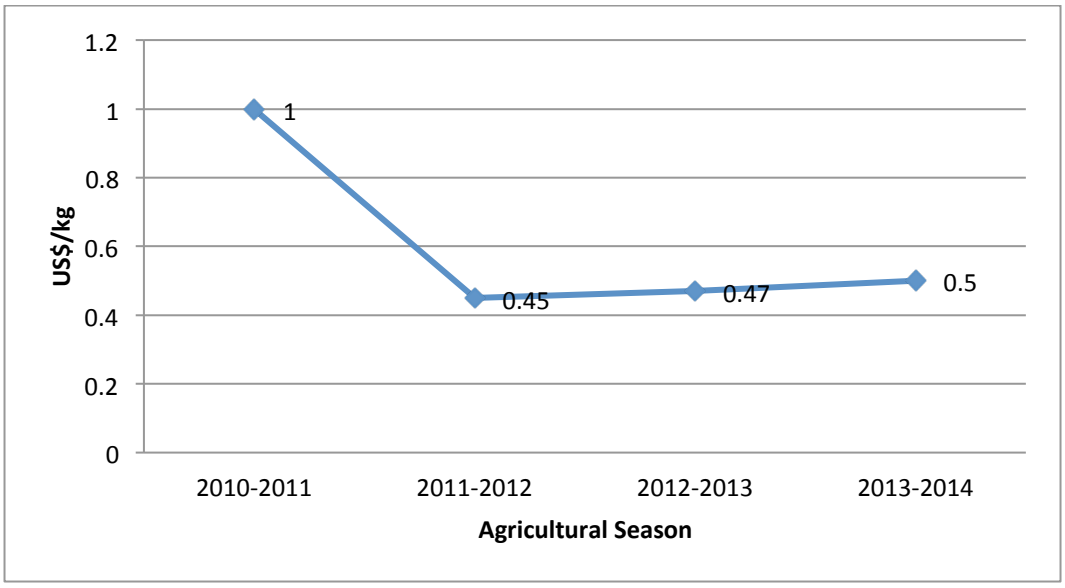

Figure 2: Average Cotton Producer Prices in Zimbabwe (US$/kg) (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

The declining cotton price in Zimbabwe, which has been a result of declining international cotton prices, has led to farmers rethinking their continued cultivation of the crop. However 46% of communal farmers interviewed indicated that they may continue producing cotton and groundnuts, which are cash crops as they are viable sources for the cash economy in Zimbabwe. 34% of the respondents indicated that since they are under contract farming for cotton, they are willing to produce the cash crop and gain the little profit left on the open market.

Communal agriculture is heavily linked to family size and gender. This is due to the fact that most resources such as labour and capital are provided by close family members and kinsmen. The study found out that households with more than five adult members tend to increase the area under cultivation for cash crops and cereal grain, which is due to the availability of labour. However, households with elderly members and headed by women are mostly growing cereals rather than cash crops, indicating challenges in procuring inputs and providing labour for production.

In the resettled small-scale commercial farms, production is skewed toward the production of maize, though flue-cured tobacco production has been on the rise.

Maize production in smallholder resettled farmers is for both household consumption and commercial trading. Figure 3 below shows the average crop mix of small-scale farmers in Mazowe District, where the average farm size is 50ha:

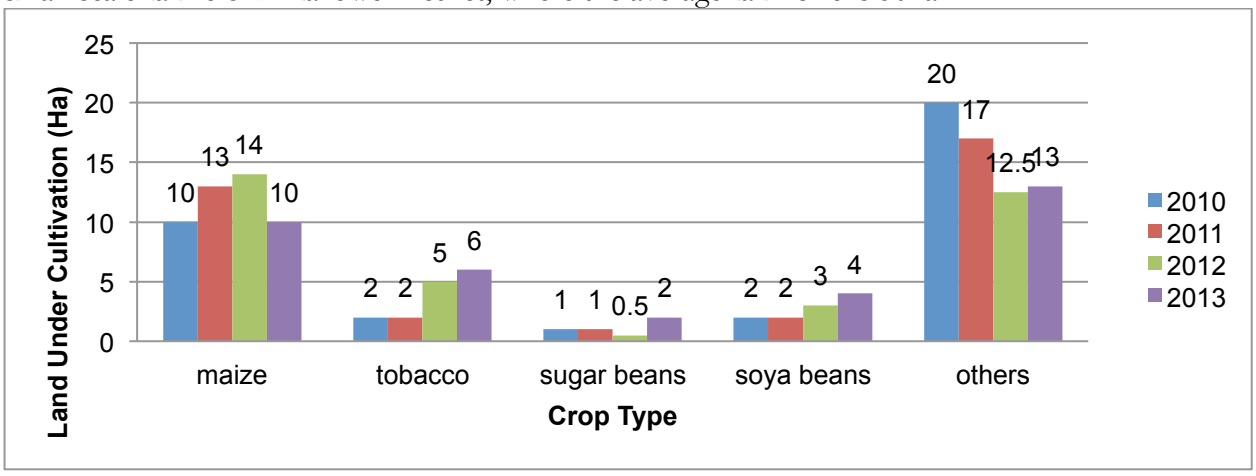

Figure 3: Crop Mix in Mazowe (Average Hectars/Season, N=50) (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

The study shows that maize crop dominates the crop mix of resettled farmers just as in communal areas. However the average hectares under maize since the year 2010 have been 12 ha, signifying that resettled farmers are in the commercial production of maize. Tobacco and soya beans production has been on the rise since 2010, owing to support systems such as contract farming to farmers from private companies. Sugar beans have the lowest area under cultivation as compared to other cash and staple crops over the years, with an average of one hectare, owing to the depressed market and lack of seed inputs for this crop.

The crop mix cultivated area analysis has a number of implications for small scale development in Zimbabwe. First, the prime agricultural area which is remaining fallow in Mazowe is a cause for concern. This was also the case with the former landowners before land reform left vast prime agriculture land fallow. In Mazowe, the study showed that over 50% of the farm area was being left fallow. There has to be policy interventions to increase area under cultivation per farm so as to boost production output.

The study revealed that output per unit area for staple crops is on the rise, particularly for resettled small-scale farmers. Generally, output per hectare tends to rise depending on sector, such as communal areas (CAs), resettled A1, and resettled A2 farmers. This is shown on Figure 4.5 below. It should be noted that in communal areas where there are low endowment sets and where rainfall is low and soils poor, cereal output has remained low below 2 tonnes per hectare per annum. One respondent indicated that maize production as the key cereal produce has become expensive due to the high costs of fertilizers and the soils' dependence on fertilisers. Though cereal output in resettled A1 farmers are above 4 tonnes per hectare, they are over 60% lower than the expected yield of 12 tonnes per hectare by the government's agricultural planning agency, AGRITEX. However, it should be noted that within the A2 small-scale resettled farmers, cereal production has been on the rise since 2010 (see Figure 4). This is basically due to intensive farming systems used

by these farmers, as they tend to reduce the area under cereal cultivation and increase the area under cash crops, especially tobacco.

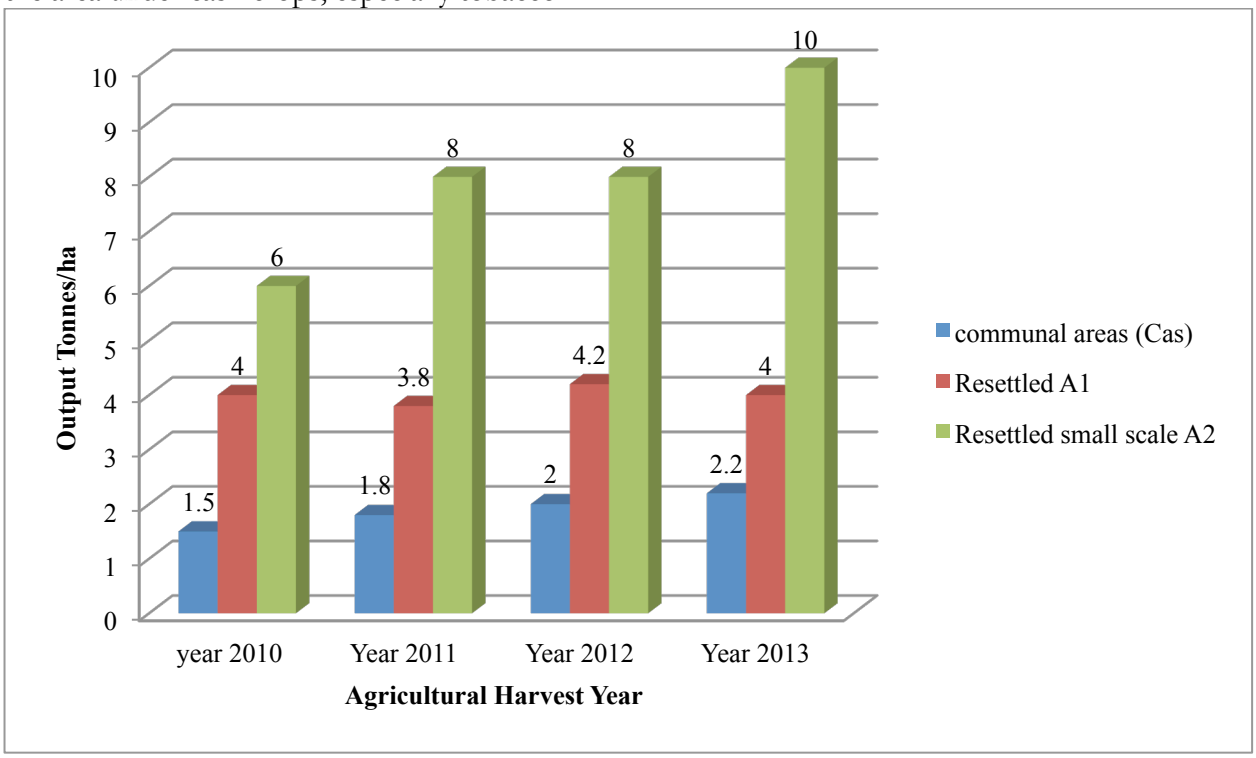

Figure 4: Smallholder Agriculture Staple Production by Sector (ton/ha, N=150) (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

Another variant in smallholder agriculture in Zimbabwe is income. Income tends to be lower in communal areas where crop output is low and livestock sales are low due to huge transaction costs. One interesting finding of the study is that average income within resettled A1 farmers is increasing at a faster rate than that of resettled small-scale A2 farmers. This has been explained by a number of issues. First A1 farmers have just 6ha of land while their counterparts have an average of 35ha of land, and thus their operations tend to be intensive. Second, most A1 farmers have been increasing land under cash crops, particularly tobacco, as they take advantage of reforms in the tobacco industry, such as input provision and marketing. Respondents in Mazowe (A2) indicated that since 2010, inputs are increasingly difficult to access, as most programmes for input provision have scaled back or have collapsed due to the liquidity crunch in the country. Respondents from the Ministry of Agriculture pointed to the high default rates on loans accessed in banks, which have led them to be snubbed by local financial institutions.

One critical finding of the study is that if cereal and cash crop output are to be increased to meet both national food security needs and trade balances, the State has to improve the endowment sets of Communal farmers since that is where most farmers are located through the provision of modern inputs. The State also has to improve input supply systems in resettled areas and find appropriate financing options for farmers. This necessitate the study to closely examine the findings on agriculture input distribution and financing.

In communal farming areas, livestock production is practiced by all the respondents interviewed, though 65% have only small livestock such as goats, sheep, and chicken, while about 45% have both cattle and small livestock. Despite the huge benefits of small livestock in nutrition and income generation through sales, respondents noted that they require cattle for draught power and as a precaution against livelihood shocks such as death, drought, and prolonged sickness. It was also noted from the study that households with cattle are likely to be male headed and have an average output of cereals of 4 tonnes per annum with a significant output of cash crops. This means that poverty in communal areas in gendered and structured by family structure and size.

Livestock production is also a key farming practice in resettled farming areas. Over 90% of all interviewed respondents indicated that they own cattle and have at four cows per household. This is significant for draught animal power, especially in light of the fact that farm mechanisation is minimal in resettled farming areas. However respondents pointed out that insecurities on farms have resulted in many farmers losing their livestock to theft. This is corroborated by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), who have indicated that cattle rustling has been increasing at a rate of 5% yearly from reported cases of 1223 in 2009, especially in peri-urban farming areas like Mazowe (Herald, 2013). Improving the security of resettled farmers improves their endowments sets and provide opportunities for further investments in agriculture.

4.2 Input Distribution and Agricultural Financing

Agricultural inputs are essential in the production process, and their supply at appropriate prices and locations is vital. Agriculture in Zimbabwe, both small and large scales, has options of inputs provision and financing options which range from government-funded to private schemes. The effectiveness of these financing options to various farmer groups such as communal, small-scale resettled farmers, is the subject of this analysis.

4.2.1 Government Input Schemes

The Agriculture Sector Productivity Enhancement Facility (ASPEF) was introduced by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) as part of its quansi-fiscal approaches to agriculture financing in 2005. The fund was to finance agricultural inputs, equipment, and infrastructure provision. The input facility was to procure inputs and loan them to farmers at concessional rates so as to stimulate production given the country's socio-economic decline. Farmers in resettled areas were also funded for the construction of dams, barns for tobacco processing, and other infrastructure as a capacity building measure. ASPEF funds were allocated to irrigation infrastructure, horticulture, beef cattle support, dairy support, piggery and poultry, crops, and other livestock facility and export promotion. Except for export promotion and horticulture, all other funded areas were allocated 20% each of the ZW$5 trillion (equivalent to US$60 million, Gono, 2007).

The RBZ's ASPEF facility has a number of challenges. First, prioritisation under the facility was a problem, as the government failed to allocate resources to

crops such as cereals which are vital for food security. Food security is not only a key driver to economic development, but also a right to citizens (Rahim, 2011). Secondly, the fund failed to allocate funds per sector or agricultural type, such as communal farmers, A1, and A2 farmers. The allocation of inputs was generally per province and farmer, and thus smallholder farmers were crowded out of the facility. 70% of communal farmers interviewed in the study revealed that inputs under ASPEF were secured only by influential A2 farmers and political leadership, including chiefs and headman. One respondent indicated that in Ward 2 of Mudzi, it was only the headman who got a tractor under ASPEF, which is being used to fetch water and for private transport by her nephew. Failure to categorise beneficiaries and allocation of inputs based on party structures resulted in the programme being abused.

Operation Maguta was launched in 2005, as an input scheme run by the Zimbabwe National Army aiming to boost agriculture production and food security, and by extension ensure a stable security environment in the long run. The program initially had a target of 250,000ha of cultivated land targeting cereal production. Soldiers were assigned to districts, especially in communal areas where they assist in the dissemination of farming information, tillage of land, and distribution of seeds and fertilizer packs to farmers. The programme was expanded in 2007 to bring up to 800 000ha of land under cultivation. Though Operation Maguta managed to deliver input packs to deserving communal farmers, it neglected A1 and A2 farmers who were also facing challenges to source inputs due to the economic recession. The input scheme placed orders on input suppliers in the country, leaving low stocks on the open market. Fertilizer manufacturing companies were always behind in stocking the program and were left with no room for stocking the open market. This means that farmers who did not benefit from the input scheme were left with no alternative to purchase inputs, hence the subdued production. Critics of Operation Maguta point to the partisan distribution of inputs, particularly in communal areas. This is vividly captured by one respondent, who narrated his assessment of the scheme in Figure 5 below:

> The army came with Operation Maguta when things were difficult. Inflation was very high and most of us here did not have money to finance our farming operations. The major challenge of the operation was to do with selection of beneficiaries for the program. Since the inputs were free local political leaders were demand a share hence as a result very few common villagers were taken aboard in the program. If one was labelled an opposition activist or a sympathizer then you could not enroll in the program. Another problem was that the input scheme did not work with existing agriculture extension workers in our ward but relied on soldiers whom we know are not farmers, so their methods were always different from ours when it comes to production.

Figure 5: Respondent's View of Operation Maguta (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

The challenges of Operation Maguta as put forward by the respondent of the partisan selection of beneficiaries were also corroborated by other sources in the Ministry of Agriculture. Officials from the agriculture ministry felt that they were supposed to run the program since they have structures in farming communities who

could distribute the inputs efficiently. It was clear that the government in the preceding years of 2007 to 2008 was facing a serious economic meltdown, which has left many government departments dysfunctional, hence the need for a coordinated response from the army. Pazvakavambwa (2009:3) further notes that, "there was gross abuse of this scheme resulting in the squeezing-out of genuine farmers, secularized input distribution, and the diversion of inputs to the black market by unscrupulous profiteers. The potential for food security had suffered another damaging blow". Even the preceding Champion Farmer Scheme by the army suffered the same fate as Operation Maguta, as there were late delivery of inputs and targeted output failed to reach 50% of yields (World Bank, 2007).

Another government input scheme is the Presidential Well-Wishers Special Agriculture Input Scheme (PWSAIS) which was launched in the 2010/2011 agricultural season. The input scheme objectively sought to avail agriculture inputs at no costs to the farmers by the President as a response to the poor funding of agriculture by the Inclusive Government (Herald, 2010). The justification was that the Finance Ministry was stifling funding to agriculture so as to sabotage the ZANU PF government's land reform program (the then Minister of Finance was the Honorable Tendai Biti from the former opposition Movement of Democratic Change (MDC)).

The PWSAIS sourced inputs such as maize seeds and fertilizers and distributed them to provinces which then distributed to farmers in districts in turn. The scheme targeted 800,000 farmers, including resettled farmers and smallholder and large-scale farmers. It also distributed inputs to communal farmers who were supposed to be the majority beneficiaries. Inputs were largely distributed through ZANU PF structures, hence allegations that opposition supporters were not allocated inputs, particularly in communal areas such as Muzarabani, Chipinge, Gokwe Nembudziya, Mudzi South, and Murehwa North. In most provinces, the large quantities of fertilizers were reportedly looted by senior politicians, resulting in even ZANU PF supporters failing to access the inputs. It should be noted that the PWSAIS has become a yearly input scheme, hence efforts should be made to improve its transparency so as to benefit targeted households.

In 2013, the Government of Zimbabwe launched the Agriculture Input Support Programme (AISP) for the 2013/4 farming season, targeted at 1.6 million households at a total cost of US$161million. The input scheme targeted the communal, old resettlement, small-scale and A1 scale and A1 farmers. Under the scheme, each household is to be given 50kg of Compound D fertilizer, 50kg of ammonium nitrate (AN), 50kg of lime, and 10kg maize seed pack (Moyo, 2010). Under the same fund, the government intended to clear its debt with input suppliers such as seed houses and fertilizer manufacturing companies, which stood at US$11.9 million. The government also owed about US$10 million to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), resulting in its failure to pay farmers for past grain deliveries.

AISP intended to distribute the input packs through the GMB. However it was noted that this became the major challenge for the scheme, as GMB is not situated in all farming communities. GMB has also suffered perennial logistical challenges in input deliveries, resulting in its failure to deliver inputs on time (Pazvakavambwa, 2009). Farmers also have to incur high transport costs to the GMB depots to check on the availability of inputs and to collect them.

Perceptions of respondents to the effectiveness of these government schemes vary due to the issue of whether the respondent benefited from the scheme or not, and political affiliation, as most ruling party supporters are eager to paint a rosy picture of party-distributed input schemes. Perceptions also varied as to whether the respondent is a communal, A1, or A2 farmer. On the effectiveness of each scheme, the subsidized voucher input scheme (AIS) by the government in the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 agricultural seasons was highly regarded, especially by small scale communal farmers. This is shown in Figure 6 below:

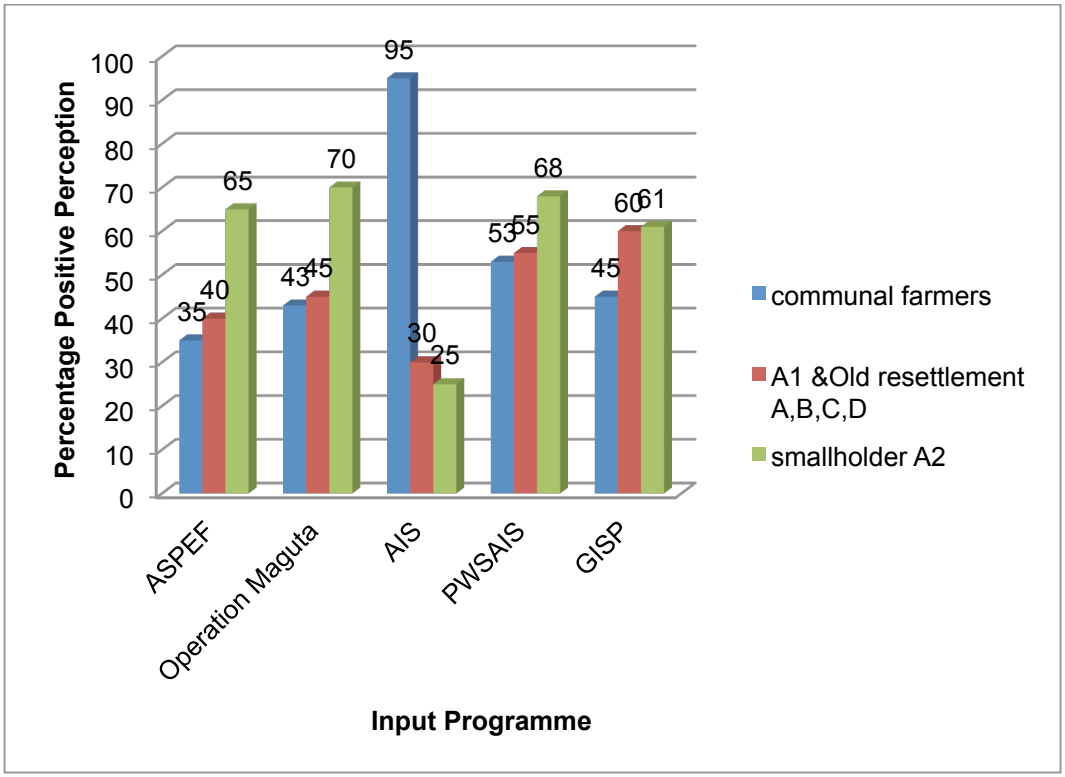

Figure 6: Percentage Positive Perceptions on Various Input Programmes by Farmers (N=150) (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

Overal, communal farmers ranked higher with the donor and government funded AIS where they used vouchers, reflecting the effectiveness of the system and its ability to deliver inputs on time to farmers through agro-dealers. All the input schemes except the PWSAIS were ranked below 50% owing to their lack of transparency and poor selection criteria by the distributors. Most A1 and A2 ranked favorably the free inputs schemes which were distributed through party structures. This may be explained by the fact that most of these farmers have the political muscle to tussle the inputs, especially when they were able to be allocated during the land reform process.

4.2.2 Donor Funded and Private Input Schemes

The input scheme which was co-administered by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture was funded by

the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the European Union, and Zimbabwe's agriculture ministry, which also provides extension and training services. The Agriculture Input Scheme was targeted at communal farmers for inputs and tools for agriculture and was subsidized at the level of 90%, with farmers expected to pay 10% of the costs. The inputs were distributed through agro-dealers who were selected by FAO and were situated in the selected communities and have the ability to stock up to appropriate levels. Farmers were given a voucher with US$128 and farmers top it with $35 so that they can redeem it at the agro-dealer's shop. Agro-dealers stocks comprise of seeds, fertilizers, and tools such as ploughs, wheel boroughs, and small implements.

This subsidized voucher scheme was hailed by farmers and agriculture respondents. Respondents in Mudzi were ranking the scheme positively, as they emphasized that the selection of beneficiaries was politically neutral and the scheme enrolled almost 95% of households in a village. Analyst pointed the scheme's effectiveness on the structure of input packs were farmers who were allowed to select the quantities and composition of the voucher basket on their own, meaning resources were optimally deployed. Moreover the fact that farmers were to contribute 10% of the costs meant that none were able to prioritise what they require and could not hoard inputs on the expense of others. Challenges of the scheme include "the lack of collateral security among agro-dealers, resulting in reluctance by suppliers to supply in bulk, and a tendency among dealers to hike prices of inputs and tools" (FAO, 2009).

The private sector has been running input schemes for farmers. This has been through contract farming where farmers are given all the input requirements for a crop or livestock. Farmers would sign contracts agreements with financiers on a specific hacterage and agree to sell the produce to the financier. This is mainly the case with cotton, tobacco, and soya bean production. Companies which have been practicing contract farming in the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (COTCO), Ivirnes, Dairyboard Zimbabwe, and other financial institutions, have been of late financing tobacco growing.

Challenges of contract farming in Zimbabwe have been largely due to mistrust between private financiers and farmers. Farmers allege that they are given inadequate inputs at inflated costs while at the same time being forced to sell their produce at low prices, thereby running loses to their operations. Private companies point to the distorted input supply chain where government interventions distort prices and force available stock to be expensive, passing on the costs to the farmer. The prevailing liquidity crunch means that the available financial options remain depressed, hence credit becomes and farming largely unprofitable.

For effective rural development in Zimbabwe there is need for the active role of the State in the provision and financing of agriculture inputs. The State has to develop a framework for donors, the private sector, and agro-dealers to work together in providing affordable inputs in efficient markets. The subsidised voucher system where government partnered FAO and agro-dealers to offer subsidized inputs is a start. The State's direct involvement in the distribution and supply of inputs will remove market efficiencies, raise prices in secondary markets, and may spearhead corruption and the speculative hoarding of inputs. This kind of distortion may result in expensive financial options to farmers and sub-standards input

products, which will affect productivity on farmers. The State need to devise a well-coordinated input supply chain at appropriate subsidy levels to various categories of farmers.

4.3 Labour for Smallholder Agriculture

Smallholder agriculture in both communal and resettlement areas is labour intensive. It is therefore important to consider the labour shortages and supply constraints of smallholder farmers. Of great importance to the study is the household headship in various tenure systems. Household headship is shown in Figure 7 below:

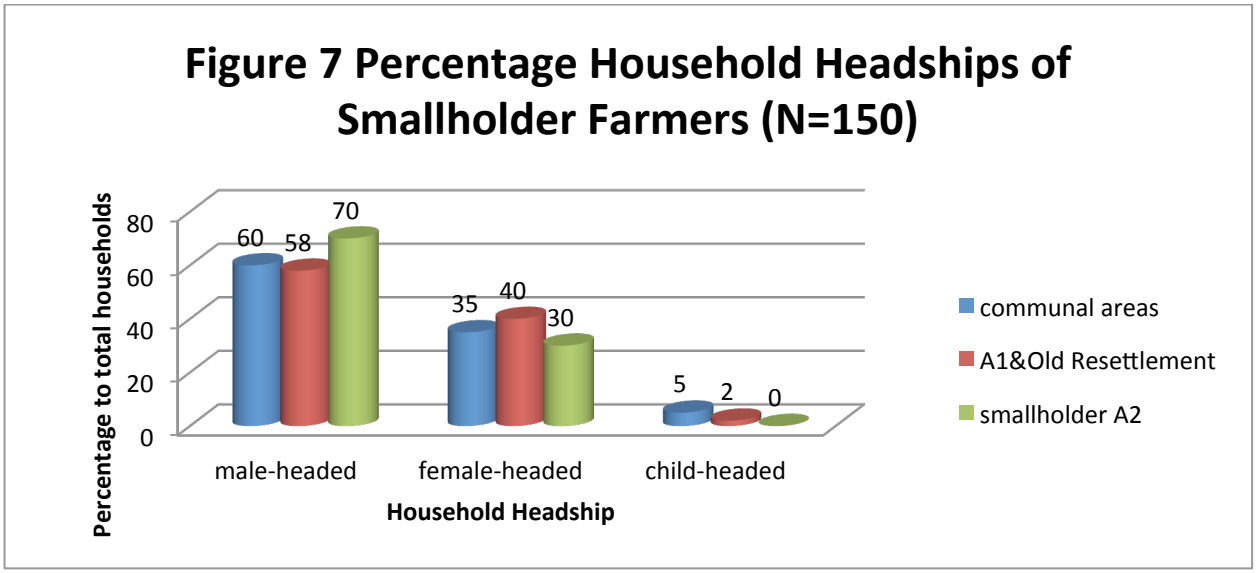

Figure 7: Percentage Household Headships of Smallholder Farmers (N=150) (Source: Fieldwork, 2013)

The study revealed that in all tenure systems, household heads are predominantly male, though women constitute a significant proportion of these households. Further analysis revealed that of the 60% male-headed households in communal areas, half of them are working or living away from their families, mainly due to work commitments, leaving women in charge of the households. This squarely puts the women responsible for production and labour arrangements. Combining the proportion of women whose husbands are away and female-headed households means that communal agriculture is done mainly by women and children, which is the same view of the World Development Report 2008. Women are also keen to take ownership of land, especially resettled land, as the government moves to achieve gender parity.

Household headship has a number of implications on communal agriculture. Women- and child-headed households face challenges in accessing inputs, particularly those which are distributed through party and government structures such as GIS and PWSAIS. This is mainly due to the patriarchal dominance in traditional rural authorities where power allocates resources and women without husbands are seen as having low morals. The study further supports this contention

in its discovery that only 20% of female- and child-headed households were able to access inputs under PWSAIS. Representation in local committees and institutions which decide on beneficiaries of input schemes normally excluded female and child households heads, leaving males to dominate production and financial issues in the communities.

Gender relations in resettled areas have less bearing on resource mobilisation and access to subsidised inputs. The study finds that the conditions of women in resettled areas (both A1 and A2) are better off than their communal area counterparts, owing to their social status. 70% of these women are either local leaders of political parties or war veterans, which means they do command power to wrestle resources with their male counterparts.

The study further revealed that 73% of communal households entirely rely on family labour for the production of both crops and livestock. The average family size is five per household, though the average adult working members are three per household. Households with paid labour were less than 20% in communal areas of which mostly included one labourer who herds cattle. Crop production in communal areas is mainly by own family labour. This lack of paid labour indicates risk aversion strategies of substantive communal farmers, a fact which is noted by Todaro and Smith (2012:438).

The use of paid labour tends to increase in both resettlement tenure systems, with an average of two workers in A1 sector and four workers in A2 sector. This may be an indication of rising income level owing to favourable farming regions and cash cropping. It was further noted that 80% of households who exceeded their category level of number of paid workers are all producing flue-cured tobacco.

It should be noted that farmers with few adults who can work in the fields and have no paid labourers tend to cultivate fewer hectares of land and tend to work seasonally on their farms. This is in contrast to A1 and A2 farmers who tend to cultivate over 6 ha per household and work for over three quarters of a year in their fields. Thus, if production is to be raised in communal areas, more production systems which minimise labour ought to be adopted.

4.4 Farmer Producer Organisations

Farmer organizations are critical in efficient agriculture systems. They are critical in price negotiations for produce by farmers and assist in knowledge transfers on best practices for farming. "Membership of a farmer organization helps farmers learn new ideas and techniques for ecologically sound farming and for conserving an area's natural resources" (Mupetesietal., 2012).

Farmers in Zimbabwe are mainly represented by two main producer organisations, which are Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) and Commercial Framers Union (CFU). These organisations have other numerous affiliates which are crop or livestock specific. Historically, these farmer organisations have a racial divide, with the ZFU being dominated by black Zimbabweans and the CFU by white farmers. Though ZFU indicates that they have small-scale farmers and large-scale farmers, their membership diaries indicate that most of their members are large-scale farmers. The CFU has large-scale commercial farmers as the majority of its members. Though both organisations have affiliates where small-scale farmers are members, their basis

is commercial farming, leaving small-scale communal farmers without representation. This is clearly shown in the study, where 96% of interviewed communal farmers are not members of any farmer organisations. Most communal farmers indicate that they only channel their representations to government through local party structures and agriculture extension officers. However, about 6% of small-scale farmers in resettled areas indicated that they were members of ZFU affiliated producer organisations, though none were affiliated with the CFU.

In terms of technical farming expertise and organisational strength, CFU appears to be on top, as it has a proper secretariat to run it. CFU has run a number of commissioned studies in Zimbabwe, particularly on reviving the agriculture sector. However, the efficiency of CFU as a farmer organisation to engage the State and other stakeholders has been undermined by its racialized membership and allegations that it was against the post-2000 land reform.

Although ZFU is favoured by the current government in Zimbabwe, it lacks the capacity to influence policy and practice. This has been to its lack of resources, as the bulk of its membership is from the post-2000 land reform when the economy was in recession, making contributions negligible. The most visible activity of ZFU is on negotiating producer prices, particularly cotton and maize. However, in most of these negotiations, farmers seem to lose much, as pegged producer prices of staple crops are usually below production costs (Chronicle, 2012).

It is critical that farmer organisations in Zimbabwe embolden their capacity in substantive issues of agriculture and engage the government effectively on policy matters. Current investment climate in Zimbabwe may be in favour of industrial growth and using agriculture as a cheap source of raw materials. Policy issues on the supply chain of inputs and output pricing needs to be agreed upon by farmers, government, and the private sector buyers. Effective representation of all farmers in markets and government policy level usually help in boosting production, particularly of small-scale farmers (Bratton 1987:397; IFAD, 2013 and Mupetesietal., 2012).

5. Conclusion

A rural development policy in Zimbabwe ought to recognise the central role of small-scale agriculture. The realities of agriculture and rural development in Zimbabwe points to the existence of small-scale farming households. Empirical evidence has pointed to the fact that small-scale agriculture is the mainstay of the Zimbabwe economy, as it has the largest share of national populations, yields, and agricultural land. Thus, an effective rural development policy should identify itself with the socio-economic setting of smallholder agriculture with the overall aim of improving efficiency, productivity, and transformation. Small-scale agriculture would be greatly enhanced through appropriate input supply systems, technological innovations, infrastructure, and produce markets. The temptation for populist regulations of these rural cardinal conditions should be resisted, as it will wipe out all market benefits of households. This does not imply a docile State, but an activist one which strives to provide the policy framework for market-friendly approaches through both the public and private sectors. The State's role should be to stimulate markets and monitor initiatives so that they may not be hijacked by profiteering capitalists. Encouraging win-win scenarios in rural development would remove

distortions in both inputs and produce markets. It is in pursuant of this narrative that the State ought to roll back produce marketing boards and replace them with competitive markets such as the tobacco auction market in Zimbabwe.

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